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Week 31
Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh
James Brown

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. This is Sheila Walsh. And you know Sheila...

Sheila: I'm excited!

Randy: I am too! You are going to have to restrain me because my nature is going to want to talk about sports and about football because of our guest. Would you welcome James Brown?

[Cheers & Applause]

James: It all ties together though. Thank you.

Randy: I've been watching you for years on television because I'm a football fan. I always thought, what a great sportscaster, a great journalist. Seems like a nice guy but there is so much more to your story than I realized. You are a man of faith which is always encouraging when we see secular media. How does that work?

James: That's the foundation, believe you me, and I learned that a long time ago, especially given that I did not play football. There was a time that I probably looked like a football player because I'd gotten up to -- in high school I played basketball at about 195 pounds. A few years ago I had gotten up to about 295 pounds so I was trying to look the part on TV but I feel so much better at it with this.

But we had a very strong mom in our family. My mother, God bless her, she is in heaven now. Our father had a deathbed conversion. He passed away at the tender age of 46; mom was with us only until age 72. But we called her the sergeant and she was the strong one in the family. We saw how much she sacrificed for the five of us; I'm the oldest of five kids. And wherever mom went, we went. I am and was a mama's boy not in the pejorative sense of the word but because I saw how much she sacrificed to pour into us. When she grabbed a hold of Jesus Christ or maybe it was vice versa, so did we and that's the

foundation of everything we do.

Sheila: You actually were heading for a career in basketball. So how did that unfold for you?

James: You know what, Sheila? That was a very interesting experience because I wanted to be a professional basketball player. I was a pretty fair high school player, two time high school All American; was sought after by over 200 colleges.

Sheila: Whoa, whoa, whoa! You just skimmed right over that. I was pretty good. That's amazing!

James: It actually feels a little awkward now even to talk about those things being so grounded in the faith because I know all those things without getting too Christianese represent wood, stubble and hay; those things burn up in front of the Lord -- it is only what we do for him. But I was blessed to be a pretty fair basketball player, recruited by virtually every major college in the country as a high school senior and thought I had a future in professional sports.

But the lesson I learned when I got to college, I didn't work as hard to stay on top as I did to get to the top. So that when I was drafted by the Atlanta Hawks, while I knew I could play basketball, there was no way I was going to make up in six months what I didn't work assiduously and diligently at for four years. But I learned a very painful lesson so I vowed that in the game of life I would never let an opportunity pass me by that I wasn't prepared for. And getting a hold of the Word of God, just like in basketball, our high school coach told us there is no such thing as standing still. You're either getting better or you're regressing. Same thing in terms of one's faith. You're either getting better or you're regressing. So I want to continue to grow in his word and that's what it is all about.

Sheila: Do you remember a moment when -- you talk about the influence of your mom but do you remember the moment you made this faith your own?

James: Great question. Yes, I do. As a matter of fact, back in 1974 when I committed to go on a search to understand who God was and I said, "If you're real, make yourself known to me and I will serve you." Do you know the very next week I went out and engaged in hedonistic pursuits, a party, and I felt like I'd committed high treason? And I apologized to the Lord then because it just wasn't for me anymore. Happy hours didn't hold anything significant. Hedonistic pursuits period don't hold anything but once I started that 12-year search and found a good word teaching church, Rhema Christian Center Church in Washington, D.C., that's when it became real to me and that's when it is

most important because you really can't live off of your mother's faith or your dad's faith, it's got to be your own. You're right, Sheila.

Sheila: That's beautiful!

Randy: So you got cut by the Atlanta Hawks. Did you get cut by another pro team?

James: Wow! So you're really trying to dig deep here.

Sheila: Ouch!

James: You want to see me cry, is that you want to see me do? Yeah, the following year, because I was working with corporate America with Xerox, in sales and sales management, Red Auerbach was a good friend. He invited me to the Boston Celtics camp. And when I was one of the last players cut from that team he wanted me to go overseas and I said, "No. You know what? My mother and father worked extremely hard for us to get a good education. Let me embark upon a career in the game of life."

So I did not go overseas and I wanted to be a champion in the game of life and that's what the pursuit has been since then.

Randy: So that's where I was going was that you say that you learned a little bit about work ethic through maybe not doing it right in the...

James: Absolutely! Absolutely!

Randy: Because one of the things that I noticed about you on television is that you are really good at what you do. And obviously, that is the opinion of non-Christian people in the sports and journalism world because they keep promoting you.

James: I didn't think that that would happen. All I know is I just wanted to, I believe it is in Colossians 3:23 where it says, "Do all that you do heartily or excellently as unto the Lord." So I wanted to make certain that I was pursuing excellence to glorify him. And if I did that, man can't help but be satisfied, even to the degree of covering sports. Hey look, when I was at FOX they asked me to host the hockey show. Hockey!

[Laughter]

So I get introduced...

Randy: I like hockey! You made it if you're there.

James: It is one of the most outstanding audio-visual sports that there is to hear the blade on the ice. But I knew nothing about hockey and I'm studying for it. So I get introduced to the national press.

And as I'm being introduced all these grizzled writers, they're asking questions, "J.B., do you know what icing is?"

So I explain what icing is.

"J.B., do you know what a two line pass it?"

I explain what a two line pass is.

"J.B., do you know how they substitute in hockey?"

I said, "Of course, they have line shifts." I said, "Look, why don't we take the veneer off the questions? I understand what you're asking so let me just be clear. No, hockey wasn't big in my neighborhood, I get it. And the only thing I have in common with the sport is the color of the puck. I get that."

[Laughter]

I said, "However, I will be an excellent ambassador for the sport." And I did.

And I knew I made it when I was covering a Stanley Cup final and we're in New Jersey. I'm one of the only few people of color in a stadium. And about ten little white kids come up and they've got this sign and they chant it. And it's got my picture on it and it says, "James Brown, godfather of gold." So I knew I'd made it.

[Applause]

I've got that in my basement now.

Sheila: You talk about a time in your life in your book where you had to kind of make a leap of faith. You had this good job, and you're making a good salary, and you've been kind of moonlighting as a sports reporter but there came a point where you had to decide I'm going to believe. How did you make that decision? Because I think of people listening in and they think, I feel like my destiny is somewhere else but it doesn't look as

rock solid as what I have right now.

James: I was looking for a safety net and actually, Sugar Ray Leonard, the boxer, it was his attorney who told me I had what was called "a scholarship mentality." I wanted a safety net that if this pursuit of something in broadcasting did not work out, then I would be guaranteed another job. He says, "No, you're only guaranteed success to the degree that you're ability, God says in his word, your gift will make room for you."

So I said, "Okay, let me go and pursue that."

I'd asked one gentleman who had been in the broadcasting business for a while, "But can I use that as a platform to do other things?"

He said, "No, you need to focus on that."

But in my heart, in my spirit, I felt like I could do other things. Little was I aware that it will be a ministry platform. So broadcast, this is my avocation, my vocation is about the Word of God. I'm blessed to be on the ministerial staff at our church. I really feel a commitment to go out and to speak the Word of God. And I have a particular commitment then in heart for young people and for men because so many men think that being involved in faith is a crutch and it is not a crutch. It is the truth -- the Word of God. And I've done my own deep search and study.

And the fact that even in the Old Testament, there are over 2,000 predictive, specific prophecies, not like a lot of faiths, if you will where they have a general philosophy or prophecy that is revised when it didn't come true, not so with the Bible specifically because if anybody can prove one prophecy did not come true, the Bible loses its voracity or its inerrancy, if you will. So the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and my effort is to convince young people, to show them that there is absolute evidence to support that. And for those who try to say, "Give me more evidence" please, the evidence is there enough to have a convicting belief that Jesus Christ is exactly who he says he is.

And if somebody says, "You know what? I don't think there is enough evidence." The absence of evidence doesn't mean that the evidence is absent. It is absolutely there so root your life on the foundation of the inerrancy of God's word.

Sheila: One of the things you speak about -- were you going to ask something, Randy? One of the things you speak about that I think is huge is the difference between being able to get a woman pregnant and being a father.

James: And that is certainly very personal with me in the book; I did ask my daughter for permission about that, my ex, as well, and of course, my wife. I talk about that because in certain communities it is almost a pathology where you talk about your baby's daddy. Please! That's not speaking truthfully to how serious a responsibility that is. I had my child out of wedlock. My daughter is not a mistake. I'm very proud of her. She has blessed me and my wife with four grandkids. Her husband is saved, they're saved, and my ex is saved, my wife -- so God worked it out. But I waited a long time to get married so that my daughter would be old enough so that I could talk with her to explain why mom and dad didn't get married and it had nothing to do with mom, it had everything to do with the immaturity in this gentleman here. So she understood that. And thank God, so now she is with a man of faith and it all worked out well. The Lord has me now with a testimony to go around to convince men of what being a kingdom man, of being what a father is all about in the sense of God the Father.

Sheila: Wow! That's huge!

Randy: How do you find time to do sports with all this preaching that you're doing?

James: It keeps me busy; 23 consecutive weeks I'm on the road. But you know I'm so excited, I'm here with you guys! I had no idea I would be talking to one of the best interviewers in the business, with her as well too.

Sheila: Thank you.

James: Do we both agree she is a pretty good interviewer?

Randy: The best! That's why I'm honored to be able to sit by her.

Sheila: Thank you, sir!

James: But I'm not letting him off the hook either because he asks great follow-up questions. So I take notes from everybody with whom I'm with because I never want to get complacent and assume that I know it all because I know I don't.

Randy: You just set me up for my next question.

[Laughter]

Which is, you have exemplified the principle of being excellent in your vocation and allowing the respect and the platform to share the gospel. How do you know where to let

the gospel just be shown and not spoken necessarily? Because let's face it, if you were sitting on the set of C.B.S. Sports or any of these sports shows and you just suddenly go off on preaching the gospel, you may not be sitting there very long.

James: You know my good friend Tony Dungy, and we're very close brothers in Christ, and we have to have this conversation because I shared that I know that my boss didn't hire me to proselytize on the job, that's not why he hired me. But I try to model the Bible. I believe it was Saint Francis of Assisi who was credited with the expression "Preach the gospel everywhere you go, and speak if necessary." So most people want to see a good sermon as opposed to necessarily hearing a good sermon. So if I'm modeling God's word, I think that is going to be impactful to a number of people -- and it has proven to be that way.

Look, on my job I want to do my job extremely well. I'm a journalist, I report the facts, and I'll tell the story. If I'm in a setting where I get to talk about what is important to me, then that's appropriate. But not if I'm on the set of C.B.S. News or if I'm hosting the N.F.L. Today on C.B.S. My job is to be excellent at what I do because I'm glorifying God; again Colossians 3:23 in that regard.

But if somebody comes to me and they want to know about the hope that I have and why, that's an open door, I can certainly take that. I don't do it necessarily on air. The one time that I -- there was one time I was hosting a C.B.S. news show on a weekend and we were debating with two guests whether or not the resurrection was real. One retired minister said that the Bible is a book of fairy tales, making a bigger point, is not true. The other said, "No, I believe the Bible is absolutely what it says."

I told my boss, "You might not want me to host that segment."

He says, "Why not?"

I said, "Because I'm a minister of the gospel. I'm preaching the next day on the resurrection."

He said, "You're perfect for it."

Wow! So we do that. We go through the whole discussion and at the end I'm thinking that there are people maybe in TV land, that might be their one chance to convince them about the truth of the Bible and to go for the search for themselves. I said, "You know what? All truth is parallel; what is true in the natural is true in the supernatural. We have bosses here on earth, there is a boss that we will all answer to and that boss is bigger than

anything." So I had to close out the segment by saying, "I believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. Second Timothy 3:16 says all scripture is God-breathed and is given for doctrine for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. And the resurrection is the linchpin that the Christian faith hangs on."

Now I assumed I was going to be fired after that because I'm going on the news. But you know what? The Lord protected me because I spoke the truth.

Sheila: That's beautiful! Wow! Beautiful!

Randy: There's one more question before we wrap this up. We've got to ask you about it. You alluded to it earlier and that is the slim...

Sheila: Oh yes! Look at you! You're so slender of a man!

James: Everything I do now has a biblical tie-in. I have been trying for years to lose weight. I had gotten up to, as I mentioned, 295 pounds and I tried a number of different programs thinking I could just get into shape myself. But God says in Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the Lord in all your ways. Lean not into your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path."

Well, I tied my effort to lose weight to Matthew 6:33. I said, "God, I want to serve you and be a strong healthy vessel, full of energy and stamina to do the job for you."

When I made that confession and I found out about a program NutriMost, that was developed by a Christian doctor, Dr. Ray Wisniewski, and that he rooted it to Third John two, "I wish above all things that you shall prosper and be in health even as your souls prosper." The weight started falling off. Now my wife has asked me to stop because she says my legs are too skinny and I'm cutting her in the bed.

[Laughter]

Sheila: You mention your wife but I just want to take a moment and thank you for the way that you and your wife have supported this ministry. I don't know if people know that but we're just so profoundly grateful.

James: Dr. Kevin Cosby, a pastor in Louisville, Kentucky, I asked him because I heard him give a sermon on: Break the huddle and run the play; athletically themed, biblically sound, and faith without works is dead. My wife has been supporting this ministry for years and I told her, I wanted to bring a contribution to do this as well. The stories that

you do in Angola and places in Africa, and I've seen where the kids were in line with plastic bags; they poured the hot porridge in the plastic bag and it burned through the bag and went down into the dirt and the kids were eating off of the ground. How can that not touch you?

James chapter 2, verses 14 through 26 talk about faith without works being dead; but 15 and 16 talk specifically, if somebody is naked and destitute of daily food and all you say is, "Be ye warmed and filled" and pray for them and go but you don't provide, that's not action. So I just wanted to make sure I was giving a contribution to this as well too.

Sheila: Thank you so much! It's beautiful!

James: And challenge a number of the other athletes who I know have a heart, many who are Christians as well to support the cause.

Sheila: Thank you, James! Thank you.

Randy: With your permission we would like to use this to give people clean drinking water in places where the water is contaminated and killing them. Watch this with us because we want to show you what a gift like this can do and what you can join in doing. Watch this for just a moment.

On the mission field

Announcer: The love a mother has for her children can be seen in many ways as she cares for them. When they run and play it brings a smile to her face. But for Hengmum there are no smiles, only fading memories like these clothes that once belonged to her five children who died because of waterborne illnesses.

Open Captions:

>> I feel so sad because my children died and I can't see them again.

Announcer: Hengmum had seven children in all. Her fifth child died one and a half years ago but the pain is still with her.

Open Captions:

>> My baby got sick very fast with fever and diarrhea and then died. I feel so hopeless. I lost something very important to me. I tried everything to help my baby.

Announcer: When asked what she hoped for in the future for her two remaining children, Hengmum had a very simple request.

Open Captions:

>> If I had clean water it would be a joy and then my family might not get sick and die.

Announcer: We can help make Hengmum's plea become a reality by drilling a freshwater well. And by doing so, all the mothers in her village can experience the joy of having clean water for their children.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: It's not much to ask for really; is it? I can't imagine -- I can't imagine burying one child. The thought of burying five children is -- I can't even go there.

I think of the number of times I said with my own life, "Lord, I wish I could do something more for you." Maybe that's something you've said yourself but you know in scripture where Jesus said, "Whenever you did it for the least of these, you did it for me." The thought that when you and I actually put our faith into action and do something, that we could be an answer to the prayers of a mom like that.

I've had the privilege, it's kind of severe mercy of kneeling down with some of these moms and praying for their children by name, praying that they'll be able to hold on for life. You and I can change this. It is not a lot. We can make a difference. God has given us so much and so little can -- maybe you think, well, I don't have a ton.

Do you remember how Jesus in the huge crowd of people noticed a widow putting in like just two little mites? And he says, "What she has done is more than everybody." God knows how much you have. And if you don't have a ton, and you're able to give a little, we'll join it together with ours and together we'll answer the prayers of these moms who just want clean water for their children.

Randy: When you're standing there next to one of these waterholes and you're not just seeing the film on the water but you're smelling it and you know that this is all there is, you just think, this has got to change.

The good news is we can change it. That's what we're doing. You can change it. It's a big problem but it's not too big when we all come together and we just do something. We can

give clean drinking water to people around the world. Our goal this year is over 400 wells in over 15 nations. That will take us to a lifetime of drilling. We'll pass our 6,000th well. We can do this because we know we've done it. We can tell you it works because we've seen it work in the past. It just takes us coming together. One well costs \$4,800 on average. Can you provide one well? If you can, I would encourage you to do it. Go online, pick up the phone and do it. For a lot of people, that's a lot of money. I understand. But you can partner with other viewers. \$48 will provide water for a lifetime for ten people.

So will you go to the phones? Will you go online? Make the best gift you can. Just do something. Be a part. We've got some nice gifts for you that we'd like to send to you just to remind you of your participation in giving Water for LIFE. Sheila, we're making a difference.

Sheila: I've been in these villages, Cambodia, Angola. And one day I'm in a village where there is no clean water and the children are silent and I've been in a village the next day with a water well and the way kids should be. Together you and I can change the world.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable: give her children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice, what's a mother to do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. *Mission: Water for Life* provides a new beginning for thousands of children and their families; a bright future with better health.

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift we'll send you *The Miracles of Christ; What Living Beyond Impossible Looks Like*. Filled with scriptures, prayers, and stories of Jesus' miraculous power, James Robison adds insight about how to walk in faith and live beyond the impossible.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the Morning and Evening coffee mug set. Each mug features beautiful artwork and scripture from Psalm 92:2, a wonderful reminder of

God's faithfulness each day.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request the beautiful "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write or make your gift online!

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Betty, it breaks my heart to think about little children like this, so precious, coming here and living on the side of a dump. This is where they get water and it's diseased-ridden.

Betty: It's just water that can kill them! They drink it, they swim in it, and everything alive walks through it. We need to help them!

James: It's really pretty simple but it takes all of us doing our part, joining together to give not only a cup of water, as Jesus said, but a well of water. I pray you'll make that life-giving call today. Children and their families in so many parts of the world will receive a chance at life because of the love of God shared through you.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: I hope you will join with us and with our guest James Brown in blessing people with water. I'm sorry you didn't get to meet my parents here tonight. I'm glad that Sheila and I got you but I just convey my warmest regards on behalf of them for your support.

James: This was a blessing to talk with the both of you. Your father has been an example of a kingdom man for a long time in what he's been doing and again, consistent with the mantra that I have to break the huddle and run the play to make a difference in the world, he is doing that. I love the fact that he can show emotion -- that's a real man. But please, tell your mom, the degree to which a wife is a mirror of the husband's submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, your mom is flat-out awesome and agape, tell her I love her.

Randy: I sure will! Thank you so much. Appreciate you being here. Appreciate all of you joining us today. Join us again at *LIFE Today*.

Sheila: Bye! See you next time.